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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Note: The editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this department. All communications must be accompanied by the name and address of the writer.

THE FOURTH LIBERTY LOAN AT THE PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL

Dear Editor: We of the class of '21, when detailed to engineer the Liberty Loan for the hospital, feared at first, because of the many deterrent factors, the most formidable being the influenza epidemic, that we might not reach the \$25,000 goal we had set, spurred on by the fact that the class above us had raised over \$23,000 on the Third Loan. Assured, however, of the hearty support of the officers of the School of Nursing, we set to work with a will and in an incredibly short space of time found that we were making rapid strides toward our goal. A Liberty Loan rally was planned, and the vivid recital of experiences overseas by Miss Maxwell and Madeline Jaffray, the first nurse to return to this country wearing the Croix de Guerre, resulted in our garnering a goodly harvest. At a Liberty Loan meeting of our class, a class bond for \$100 was bought and this, with another bond for the same amount to which the whole school subscribed, was presented to the Alumnae for the Pension Fund. \$24,450 was our total the night before the closing day of the drive, but we were confident of reaching our goal, for the morning would bring that magic day,—pay day. And, truly, it proved all of that. Our scouts assiduously shadowed the paymaster, and rich were the findings of those who camped on his trail, for with a last mighty impetus they sent our drive hurtling over the top. We could scarcely believe it when we saw the Presbyterian Hospital total; it fairly danced before our eyes,—\$32,100!

New York

MARGUERITE A. WALES,
President of the Class of '21.

LETTERS FROM NURSES IN SERVICE

Dear Editor: When we arrived, last November, we were the first American hospital to come to this place, consequently we had some hardships which will not probably be experienced by nurses coming over in the future. Strictly speaking we cannot say that we really suffered. The worst feature was the lack of heat in our houses and hospitals. We were cold, as this is a place ideal in summer, but in no way prepared for winter residents except for the few inhabitants who live here all the year. Five big summer hotels were assigned to us for our hospitals, these being entirely separate and scattered over an area of about five city blocks. Three of these had been used as hospitals by the French, who made a hurried departure on our arrival. Our nurses were given quarters in two villas and one hotel. The latter place was rather uncomfortable at first as it took about six weeks to get the proprietor to leave. We were greatly pleased when the Government took over the place and discontinued the bar-room, which Madame had been conducting. Up to this time we had been messing with the French, but now the quartermaster's supplies were coming in, so we established our own meals with white bread and plenty of good nourishing food which so far has not been lacking. We have always employed French women in our mess, a nurse being in charge, as we have no dietitian in this unit. Our food has been good, quite as good as we have at home, with many extra delicacies at times. The variety of meat has not been great, but as most of us care less for meat

than for other articles of diet, there has been no complaint. Our dining room is large, well lighted, and we have real table-cloths and napkins, thanks to the Red Cross. We were supplied with dishes purchased from one of the hotels, and as we brought our own silver with us, we have felt no lack of ordinary comforts. Upon the arrival of our Y. W. C. A. worker, Marian Porter, the former bar-room was converted into a club-room for the nurses of the two units, our own and those of the Buffalo unit which arrived here about Christmas time. For the first three weeks after our arrival the nurses did what they could to get the hospital buildings in order, this being slow work owing to the delayed arrival of our supplies. The second week in December, we were hastily notified to be ready for three hundred patients. There was very little more than beds in the hospitals, but the patients came and we took care of them. I really think this was the best thing that could have happened to us, as we were getting disagreeable and discontented with too much time to think of our discomforts and to indulge in homesickness. Our patients came from near-by camps and were mostly medical cases,—mumps, scarlet fever, meningitis, and pneumonia being the principal ailments. And what a homesick lot of boys they were and how they brightened when they got here and found real home folks to care for them! They told the nurses it seemed like heaven compared to the conditions from which they had come. This was good tonic for us and from that time on there has been little talk of hardship. Stoves appeared shortly and were set up wherever we needed them most. In rooms where there were no chimneys, the stove pipes were put through the windows. All the work of sterilizing and boiling in the operating rooms has been done on stoves. This has been often difficult, as the coal is of an inferior grade, and frequently the draft has been poor. A pathetic sight was a nurse trying to toast bread over a tiny stove which was smoking furiously. She was doing her best to serve a sick patient with "light diet." I cannot but feel that there will be, in the future life, a special reward for those nurses who served trays in these hospitals the first two months of our work here. It seemed best to have straight eight-hour duty at first, the division being 8 a. m. to 4 p. m., 4 p. m. to midnight, and from midnight to 8 a. m. This worked very well until the time when more of the buildings were opened. We then changed to ten hours for the night nurses, the hours being from 10 p. m. to 8 a. m., with divided time for the day nurses. All day nurses came on at 8 a. m.; one nurse went off at 10 a. m., returning at 4 p. m. and remaining till the night nurse came on. This was also satisfactory until we began to fill our hospitals at the time of the "big drive," when we had to increase the hours of the day nurses. Then came a very busy time and everybody worked at least twelve hours and frequently fourteen and sixteen. We did not count hours at one time, as the number of patients increased in three days from four hundred to over twenty-three hundred. Many of the doctors, nurses, and enlisted men worked for forty straight hours at this time, and since, as it is necessary to give immediate attention to these cases, as delay in a dressing or an operation would mean the loss of life. On admittance each patient is bathed, the nurses giving the baths to the more severely wounded who cannot go into the tub or under the shower. If the following expression was heard once, it was heard several hundred times. "Oh, nurse, this bath is worth a million dollars." After the bath the patient is fed, his wounds are dressed, and if necessary he is operated upon at once. During the last month our hospital has been made an evacuation hospital, which means constant admission and discharge of patients, the only ones retained here being those too badly wounded to be moved and those who will return immediately to duty. Besides our American boys, we have had French, British, and German

wounded. We have had also a generous sprinkling of Singalese, African, and Algerian soldiers. These men have always shown gratitude for their care, expressed perhaps in different fashion from the American way, but always as heartily and as appreciatively. I must say that the nurses have come in for the lion's share of this praise. To the Americans the very thought of being where they could talk with an American woman has meant an infinite amount of comfort and encouragement. For after all they are like children and respond to the "mother instinct" which is in the heart of every true nurse. We are not always busy, as our patients come and go, usually in large groups. During the lull we clean up the hospitals and make supplies, getting ready for the next convoy. The nurses take as much time off as possible, resting, recreating, and gaining strength for the next rush. The nurses are not assigned to one place or to one kind of duty, but are rotated as seems best for the service and for them. Each does her share of night duty and there is ample chance for those who are fitted, to do head-nurse and operating-room duty. A change of duty, we find, is sometimes as good as a vacation. During the times when we have had few patients we have had dances and card parties. Tea is served to the officers and nurses every day at the Y. W. C. A. and many a happy afternoon has been spent there listening to the tales told by the officer-patients who greatly enjoy this form of recreation. During the winter and spring the nurses took long walks through the surrounding country, visiting the small villages which nestle in the valleys of this hilly country. From the top of one hill near us we can see five of these tiny hamlets, their red roofs showing most picturesquely against the green of the trees and fields. The women of these villages are noted for their laces and embroideries and when we first came many bargains were picked up by the nurses. The day for bargains, however, is gone and now, wherever we are known to be Americans, the prices go up and we have to look for places where we are not known. All the spring and summer this place has been a garden, full of beautiful flowers, both wild and cultivated. I shall never forget the wonderful bunches of lilies-of-the-valley and forget-me-nots which we gathered in the spring, then the rose garden in the park which blossomed all the summer, and the trees which are always beautiful with their mossy green trunks and thick foliage. There are tennis courts and golf links which have been open for the use of the hospital personnel. These have been much used when our duties permitted. I cannot understand why any nurse whose circumstances permit, would hesitate to come "over here." It seems to us a wonderful privilege and a priceless experience. There has been no hardship which has not had ample recompense in the gratitude of these men for whom we have cared. This is the time for the trained nurse to demonstrate her usefulness and ability as never before and those who do not join in this work will always regret it. The greatest recompense is the feeling that we are needed and that we are capably filling this need.

France

B. K. H.